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(6)

NEPALI: ITS LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

BY

DHARMA ĀDITYA DHARMĀCHĀRYYA

(Katmandu)

There seems to be some misapprehension, in stronger words, misrepresentation about the languages of Nepal, amongst the literate people and the academic institutions in particular and the citizens in general of India. The reasons for this are that there are very few scholars at present in Nepal who can avail opportunities to interpret from historical and literary standpoints in modern scholarly form the true facts about Nepal and there were hardly any all-Indian institutions known to them through which they would be able to make known their views. Coming to know of late that the All-India Oriental Conference has taken up the work of collecting and publishing in a suitable form the valuable reports of scholarly researches made by the literate Indian world, I venture to submit this paper for the public enlightenment of all the Indian brethren and Universities. Of course it may not be unknown that since that eminent British scholar and pioneer explorer Brian Houghton Hodgson presented hundreds of the Nepalese manuscripts to Europe, prominent Eastern and Western scholars like Minayeffer, Max Müller, August Conrady, Sylvain Lévi, Takakusu, Kawaguchi, Sakaki, Rajendra Lala Mitra, Hara Prasad Shastri, Madame Neel, and many others had more or less done their utmost to interpret the language and literature of the Nepalese or vulgarly the Newaras who form the aborigines of the Nepal State which is vitally related to India in at least religion and culture. But it remains to be boldly said that there is the absolute need of a more complete and authentic interpretation of the subject which is here made to a possible extent.

ORIGIN OF NEPAL.

The original *vamśāvalī* or chronicle of the Newaras or the Nepalese who are historically known to have been the earliest settlers in the Valley of Nepal records the fact that Nepal was a lake abounding in serpents or Nāgas and that it was surrounded on all sides by the Himalayas. Although this fact has been geologically accepted and the modern State of Nepal has extended beyond the Northern and the Southern Himalayas, this lake was known as Nāgahrada or the 'abode of the serpents' and this very valley was afterwards known as Nepāla. So the only habitable site above the waters of the lake which became the historic Swayambhū, more vulgarly Sambhunāth in Parbatia and Singu in Nepali, was on the north-western mount. This mount is now classically known as Goshring, as it looked like the horn of a cow. The lake is known in the language of the people as Nāga Vāsa which is synonymous with the classical term Nāga Hrada, and is fourteen miles in length. There was no human habitation.

FIRST IMMIGRATION FROM INDIA.

Thousands of years back, it is said, in the Satya Yuga, Vipāświ Buddha came from Bandhumatī, a city in Madhyadeśa during his religious tours, with a large retinue of Buddhist monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen who before belonged to the four professions of a priest, a soldier, an agriculturist and a menial. There was Light or *Jyotiswarūpa* and those who wanted to stay there, remained behind; while Vipāświ Buddha and the rest went back to Bandhumatī. This was the first Indian settlement on the Swayambhū Mount.

ŚIKHI BUDDHA'S ADVENT.

Long afterwards Śikhi Buddha also came from India with a large following of rājās and people of the four professions. It is said Śikhi Buddha became absorbed into the *jyotiswarūpa*

and some of the retinue followed suit. While some settled here, the others went back to India. This is the second settlement.

VIŚWABHŪ BUDDHA'S VISIT.

After thousands of years came Viśwabhū Buddha from Anupamanagara in Madhyadeśa, with many disciples of this town. He too left his disciples to remain on the Mount.

FIRST CHINESE IMMIGRATION INTO NEPAL.

MAÑJUŚRĪ BODHISATTWA FROM CHINA.

Then came Mañjuśrī Bodhisattwa with a large following consisting of the Chinese prince Dharmākara and people of various avocations from Mahāchīna, Mañjuśrī himself being from Mount Pañchasīrsha or 'the five-pinnacled' now at Foochow (?). He found the Indian immigrants settled there and could not find space for his retinue. He thus found out a passage for the waters of the lake to flow out at the south-western side of the lake. The cleft is now renowned as *Koduwāla*, which is a Nepalese term signifying 'the water flowing down inside.' The water flows down deep into a pit-like bottom and cannot be seen for a great distance. Then he founded the first great city which was named after him as Mañjupattana, with its metropolis known as Rājapaṭṭana. As there must be a king to rule over the people from India and over the Chinese colonists, so he anointed the Chinese prince Dharmākara as the first king. Again Mañjuśrī introduced Chinese arts and crafts, agriculture, commerce and industries. It is also evident that more immigrants from China came afterwards; as Hodgson* also writes, 'since very many persons had come from Mount Śīrsha (China).' He further, says 'Mañju Śrī . . . gave the name of Mañju Śrī Parvata to the small hill and called the desiccated valley, Nepāla'—*Né* signifying, the sender (to paradise) who is Swayambhū, and *Pāla* 'cherished'—implying

* Essays on the Languages, Literature and Religion of Nepal and Tibet, page 11.

that the protecting genius of the valley was Swayambhū or Ādi-Buddha. Thus the valley got the name of Nepāla. . . . Thus was Nepal peopled, the first inhabitants of which came all from Mount Śirsha, which is in Mahā Chīna, and thus the valley got the name of Nepāla, and its inhabitants, that of Nepāli, whose primitive language was Chinese. This language in course of time came to be much altered by the immigration of people from Madhyadeśa, and by the necessary progress of corruption and change in a new country, till *a new language arose in Nepal by the natural course of things*. The primitive inhabitants of Nepal were all of one caste, or had no caste. But their descendants, in course of time became divided into many castes or had no caste.

FORMATION OF THE NEPALESE NATION.

Gradually the Chinese and Indian immigrants began to interconnect themselves by intermarriage, common religion, etc. Thus there resulted an interconnection of the two races from India and China and the people naturally assimilated the common and nation-building arts and the civilization of the two races. Besides these, there is evidence of fusion of not only the language but also of the facial features, of the customs and manners, etc. B. H. Hodgson who is only representing the evidences given by Pandit Amritananda of the Maha Bodhi Temple (Vihāra) at Aśoka Pattana or Pattana who is the compiler of Dharma Kosha, etc., the translator of some Buddhist works into Nepalese or Newāri and the most prominent Buddhist and Nepalese scholar of the nineteenth century, has already said as given above that *a new language grew up which became the lingua franca of the Nepalese or Newāra nation*. In the ancient chronicle or *Vamśāvalī* of which the 'History of Nepal' edited by Dr. Daniel Wright is only a Parbatia recension, modified and accepted by the Gurkhas, whose advent into Nepal dates back only to 1768 A. D. and also in the Vṛihat Swayambhū Purāṇa, the definition of the important races

that settled within and without Nepal Proper, is given thus :—

Himālayavāsibhiḥ Nepālavāsibhistathā
 Madhyadeśavāsibhiḥ sarvaiścha deśavāsibhiḥ
 (S. V. Purāṇa, p. 147).

Atra Nepālajā vāpi anyatrajā viśeshataḥ
 (Idem, p. 207).

.....Atra Nepālavāsibhiḥ
 (Idem, p. 432).

These extracts from the Purāṇa also found in the chronicles are enough to prove that the term Nepālavāsī was specially applied to denote the people who had already settled from remote ages. It is also evident that although other dynasties and races were introduced into Nepal the latter claimed their own distinctive titles. But it is a fact that those who settled afterwards might be termed Nepalese in the same way as the Moslems and Christians should be called Indians in India. Such distinctions are generally met where there exists the difference of language, literature, religion, race, customs and manners between the original settlers and the later immigrants. In the case of Nepal too there exists particular distinctions specially on account of the race and language; as, the Nepālavāsī or the original Nepalese, the Himālayavāsī or the Parbatīās who live outside the valley of Nepal and the latest immigrants—the Madhyadeśavāsī—who call themselves Gurkhās. Historically it is thus obvious that the new race was called the Nepalese or the Nepālavāsī or vulgarly the Newāras and the language that they spoke was Nepālabhāshā, Nepālī or vulgarly Newārī.

THE NEWĀRAS OR THE NEPALESE.

When Hodgson asked Pundit Amritananda, ‘ what and from whence are the Newars, from Hindusthan or Bhot and

what is the word Newar, the name of a country or a people?' the reply given was thus—'The natives of the valley of Nepal are Newārs. In Sanskrit the country is called Naipāla, and the inhabitants Naipāli; and the words Newār and Newāri are vulgarisms arising from the mutation of P to V, and L to R.' As an example he named the word Bandya (which means a Buddhist monk) which 'is metamorphosed by ignorance into Bānrā, a word which has no meaning.'

THE MEANING OF NEPAL.

There is divergence of opinion about the origin of the word Nepāla among the Nepalese and the later settlers from India. The earliest and most unanimous interpretation, also corroborated by Hodgson and Amritananda is that NE signified 'the sender' to Paradise—to Swayambhū Ādi Buddha, the Infinite or Non-Mortal Buddha, and the term Pāla meant 'cherished.' Thus the word Nepāla implied the protecting genius of Nepāla to be the first Infinite Buddha. But the significance attached to it by the later immigrants from the Madhyadeśis including the Śaivite Newārs and the Gurkhās is that the term Nepāla had its origin from a sage Ne or Neyam, who as Dr. Wright's *History of Nepal* states 'was a devotee' of Swayambhū Buddha and who was devoted to the welfare of the valley. Both of the interpretations are based on a religious claim. While the first definition is subject to the authenticity of the existence of the Eternal Buddha, the latter assumption remains to be proved. Hodgson says, 'In the Nepalese *Vamśāvalī*s the first race of kings are apparently Gwāllā and Śaivas or rather Pāśupatas who worshipped Paśhupati and received the throne from a Rishi called Neyam.' But this is open to doubt in all ways. The next dynasty is clearly barbarian and utterly alien to Sanskrit and India. It is of the Kiranti tribe now extant in all the eastern part of Nepal. This evidence is indecisive.

Professor Sylvain Lévi also quotes this evidence. Being based on Brahmanical mythology of the latter period, it is not accepted by the people—the aborigines of Nepal.

The popular assertion of the Newāras is that because Prince Dharmākara from China ruled the kingdom justly the country was called Nemenā Pālita or Nepāla. They mean to say that the people were righteously governed and so the valley was Nepāla or Nayapāla implying ‘the place protected by *nema* or more usually *naya*.’ This is the present, the rational (historical?) and the probable interpretation of the term NEPĀLA.

POST-CHINESE IMMIGRATION FROM INDIA.

ADVENT OF KRAKUTSANDA OR KRAKUCHCHHANDA BUDDHA.

Before a technical discussion of the Nepali language and literature is attempted, it is worth while to understand the effect of a number of immigrations from Madhyadeśa. After the departure of Mañjuśrī, came Krakutsanda Buddha from Kshemavatī in Jambudwīpa who was followed by Rājā Dharmapāla and a number of lay and monk disciples. Delighted at the beauty of the valley, the priests led by Kuśadhwaṇḍa and the warriors led by Abhayadaṇḍa became baptized in the order of the Bhikshus or Monks and settled here. The origin of the Bagmati, an important river is ascribed to the Bāgdwar on the Phulochcha Mountain or Foochow, where they were novitiated. This Buddha too returned afterwards with a few followers.

ADVENT OF KANAKAMUNI BUDDHA.

Then after hundreds of years came Kanakamuni (or Konagamana) from Śobhāvatī with a large retinue and he too returned leaving many disciples to live in the new valley. Hodgson adds that ‘these too, like all the preceding, soon lost

their name and character as Madhyadeśīyas, and were blended with the Nepali or Newar race.'

ADVENT OF KĀŚYAPA BUDDHA.

Centuries after arrived Kāśyapa Buddha from Kāśī, Benares, with the usual retinue and he too went back leaving behind many disciples to inhabit there. Hodgson adds that 'most of the people who came with him stayed in Nepal, and soon became confounded with the aborigines.' He is said to have sent Rājā Prachanda Deva of Gaur (Bengal) to Nepal who is famous as Śāntikara Āchāryya there. To Buddha is ascribed the naming of Benares as Kāśī.

ADVENT OF ŚĀKYA MUNI BUDDHA.

This is the only Buddha who is historically known in the history of Nepal and India. After his Buddhahood at Buddha Gaya, more apparently during his preaching at Benares, he went to Nepal, accompanied by his 1,350 disciples including the Rājā of Benares, his councillors and people. He preached on the mount which is now marked by the Puchchhāgra Chaitya, and made Chuṇḍā, a yakshiṇī, a bhikṣuṇī or nun. He is said to have visited the Namō Buddha Mount, 18 miles from Katmandu, where he, in his former birth, sacrificed his life for a tigress. His visit to Nepal occurred during the reign of Jitedasti, the then Kiranti ruler of Nepal. He left many disciples here, who as Hodgson admits, 'became blended with the Nepali race.'

CONNECTION OF INDIA AND NEPAL.

The history of Nepal and the Nepalese thus dates back to thousands of years and even the recent researches in ancient Indian history and culture are too meagre to prove the authenticity of the first six Buddhas, the existence of Ne Muni and so on. But Emperor Aśoka visited the site at Nigali

Sāgar where Kanaka Muni attained Nirvāṇa. The people of Nepal believe that the history of India and Nepal goes back to thousands of years back, that the history of ancient Indian culture has not yet been sufficiently inquired into and that there is much left for the oriental scholars to point out about Indian culture and its wide developments. Until the discovery of the ancient relics in Egypt and the archæological finds in Sind, people of India believed in the Indian calculation that the history of India commenced from the Vedic period dating from 3000 to 1500 B.C. The chroniclers of Nepal and all those who know the history of Nepal and also of India are strongly of opinion that Indian culture dates back to millions of years. Even the chief cities of Nepal have changed names and history three times.

Besides these facts the Nepalese people who trace their origin to ancient Chinese emigrants, and admit Indian connection with that Mongolian stock, as is apparent from their physiognomy, the monosyllabic nature of Nepālī or vulgarly Newārī, peculiar customs and manners and religion too, are decidedly of opinion that they had not only connection with the ancient Indian lands but also direct means of communication with India and China. The history of the Nepalese bears evidence to a number of such notable facts, viz. :—

(1) Dharmākara, the Chinese prince gave over the sovereignty of Nepal to Rājā Dharmākara of Gaur who had come with Krakutsanda Buddha;

(2) Rājā Prachanda Deva of Gaur had, as advised by Kāśyapa Buddha, came to Nepal and became a disciple of Guṇākara Bhikshu who was a follower of Mañjuśrī Bodhisattwa of China;

(3) Rājā Guṇakāma Deva of Mañjupattana now known as Kāśṭhamaṇḍapa or Katmandu* became a disciple of

* The original name of the present Kātmandu was Mañjupattana. The name was changed to Kāntipura by Rājā Guṇakāmadeva in the Kaligata year 3824.

Rājā Prachanda Deva who had become a Buddhist priest and was named Śāntikara.

Besides these records almost all of the rulers were from India. The Guptas, the Mallas, the Lichchavis, the Rājputs, the Sūryavaṃśīs, the Somavaṃśīs, the Kaṇṭhakīs, and the Rānās were all from India, although the Rājās of Nepal were connected with the Rājā of Bhoṭ or Tibet, the earliest historic account available being the princess of Nepal given in marriage to the first Buddhist ruler Srong-tsan-gampo or Śuddhajīva of Bhoṭ or Tibet, about 1,200 years back. Until the last decade there was connection with China and the principal Buddhist temple in Nepal was under Chinese religious supervision. But in spite of all the ancient connections and the advent of Indian dynasties the Nepālī or Nepalese language of Nepal did never change, as it would be evident from the following accounts.

NEPĀLABHĀSHĀ.

Thus from historical records it is evident that the language of this Nepalese nation or the Newāras is alone called Nepālabhāshā or Nepālī or Newārī. Since the advent of the immigrants from the earliest time down to the present race the only language known to the Nepālavāsis or the Nepalis is Nepālī and none else, although the Himalayan people or the Parbatias and the latest immigrants from Udaipur who were refugees from Moslem invasion gradually migrated towards a site which later became famous as Gōrkhā over 40 miles west of Mañjupattana or Katmandu, spoke the language called Parbatia or Gurkhali, a modern name. Throughout the manuscripts written on palm-leaves and yellow-painted papers of Nepal in Nepālī we find the frequent use of the usual term Nepālabhāshā. A survey of the Catalogues of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, of the Durbar Library, Nepal, of the Buddhist Sanskrit MSS. of the Cambridge University Library and also Nepalese Buddhist

Sanskrit Literature compiled by Dr. Rajendralala Mitra, will enable the ascertainment of the fact. But the greatest authority is B. H. Hodgson and his Essays which represent his scholarly convictions as well as those of Pandit Amritananda, the foremost scholar of the nineteenth century. Some of the earliest Nepalese MSS. referred to therein are worth mention here. That will prove the extensive use of the term.

In the Asiatic Society Catalogue is mentioned the Bodhi-charyāvatāra Pañjikā written in Newārī or Nepālī character in the Nepal Era 198 which is equivalent to 1078 A.C. Another is the Sampuṭa Ṭikā written in 1025 A.C. Another important work is the Chatuṣṣatikā by Āryadeva with a commentary by Chandrakīrti belonging to the eleventh century. Another work of the earlier date is the Jātakamālā of the tenth century, both of them being written in the same Nepālī character. In the Durbar Library Catalogue, the bibliographer, H. P. Shastri, draws attention to an original work Yogamālā or Haramekhalāṭikā in Nepālabhāshā—the original text of the Haramekhalā, a work written in Prakṛit verse at Bhillamalla in Guzerat. The Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra, now in the Asiatic Society of Bengal has a colophon, namely, Nepāla-Bhākhā Sambat 801, the use of Kha for the cerebral Sa being in common use. Cecil Bendall in his Catalogue of Buddhist Sanskrit MSS. of the Cambridge University Library mentions the Amarakosha with a Newārī Commentary called the Vivṛiti by Māṇikyā, the author of Abhinava Rāghavānanda Nāṭaka, written in the reign of King Jayasthiti Malla, dated 506 N. E. (1386 A.D.); the colophon of this work runs thus:—

Kṛtaishā Amarakoshasya tena *Nepāla-bhāshayā*

Again—Māṇikyavirachito Amarakoshasya Naipālabhāshāṭip-
paṇī samāpteyam. Swastīśrīmannepālikasamvatsare
506....

Śrī Jayasthitibhūpāle Nepālarāṣṭraśāstari.

In another work known as the *Stutidharma*, the term *Nepālamaṇḍale* is given. In the same catalogue in the *Panchamahārakshāsūtrāṇi* the term *Nepālavarsha* is mentioned, although the Nepalese people vulgarly call it *Newāra Saṃvata*, even *Newā Saṃvata*. In another work, namely, the *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, dated the 923 (1803) 'Abde Nepālike' is given.

The above instances are enough to prove the customary use of the term *Nepālabhāshā*, although the people use the colloquial term *Newā-bhākhā* or *Newā-bhāyé*. The Nepalese community is generally conservative and the up-to-date use of the term *Nepālabhāshā* in all the Nepalese MSS. and other writings is an obvious fact. A brief survey of their ancient and modern works of which MSS. are still innumerable, will evince the nationalistic spirit they even now cherish. They have been found using not only the term *Nepālabhāshā* or *Nepālī* for their mother-tongue but also for the usual term representing their nationality as regards the name of the country, the national year, the State, etc. Their extensive history and literature even up to the present time bears evidence to the fact that as a vernacular of the Nepalese community it holds a paramount position even in modern times. That *Nepālī* was the only language known to the country and to the State before 1768, the year of the advent of the military classes of Gurkha who took shelter there since the Moslem invasion of Chitore, had been a well-known fact, although Dr. D. Wright, the English translator of the Parbatia recension of the *Vaṃśāvalī* of Nepal which was originally in Nepali, made a scholarly mistake in his statements that some of the MSS. written in 1386 and 1629 A.D. were in Parbatīyā. Evidently, all these MSS. were written in the Nepalese language and character. Some of the MSS. written at least

DEŚABHĀSHĀ OR LINGUA FRANCA.

some centuries back particularly mentioned even in the colophons the term *Deśabhāshā*, thus proving that *Nepālī* was the

language of the country—Nepal. The great majority of the people of the Nepali race live in the cities, villages and districts of the State; while the majority of the Parbatias reside in the hill-tracts and the outskirts of Nepal Proper. It is, therefore, not strange that it should be, as in ancient times, called the Deśabhāshā of not only the Nepali community but of Nepal Proper. Of course the court language of Nepal in modern times is Parbatīā, also known as Gurkhālī.

THE NEPALI COMMUNITY.

Although the Nepali race is a single race and claims a historical descent from the Indo-Chinese family that settled in the valley of Nepal, the later immigration of the Dravidian and Aryan people from India into Nepal enforced a change in the pre-arranged order of the mono-communal race. Originally the Nepalese had no such touchable and untouchable distinctions amongst themselves. They professed various avocations of life; but the democratic institutions and influences testify to the communal unity of the race. Hodgson and Pandit Amritananda admit the fact that the Nepalis represented a single caste, all being Buddhists. In his Essays the former writes thus:—"When these Madhyadeśīyas had become numerous in Nepaul, they and their descendants were confounded with the former or northern colonists under the common appellation of Nepali and Newari; being only separated and contradistinguished by the several trades and professions which they hereditarily practised. Thus in the early ages, Nepal had four classes of secular people, as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra, and four ascetical classes, namely, Bhikshu, Śramaṇa, Chailaka, and Arhanta, dwelling in forests and monasteries and all were Buddha-mārgī." Although at present Chailakas and Arhantas are non-existent, the Buddhists formed the vast majority. Hodgson further remarks, "Buddhists, of some one or other of the above denominations, comprise the vast majority of

the Newar race, and the minority are mostly Śaivas and Śāktas." In the History of Nepal Dr. Wright says, "(Buddhists) Bandyas are like Sannyāsis, who are all of one class without any distinctions of caste." These Bandyas who are classically or formally known as Bhikshus and Vajrāchāryyas form over ten thousands. And the rest of the people are divided into 64 sub-communities with their respective minor sub-communities. Thus Dr. Wright mentions and adds that there were two classes of Brahmins, Pañchagaurā and Pañchadrāviḍa, each containing five divisions with numerous sub-divisions. Again there were four divisions of Jaisis, viz., Āchāryya, Baid, Śreṣṭha, Daivajña. Āchāryyas were divided into three classes; Baid into four; and Śreṣṭhas into many classes. Of Śūdras (farmers) there were thirty-six classes of which the Jyapu had 32 divisions, and the Kumhal (potters, etc.), four divisions. The Podhyā (untouchables) class had four divisions. Although Rājā Jayasthiti Malla defined the religious and social system of the Nepalese race before his death in Samvat 549 (1429 A.D.) there have been diverse modifications to include the later immigrants from India. But all these sub-communities of the modern Nepali race speak one and only one language, that is, Nepāla-Bhāshā or Nepālī. Thus the ancient tradition testifies to the fact that the vast majority of the Nepalese aborigines from the earliest times to the present day have been using it not only for their religious literature but the ancient chronicles, technical, commercial and all other classical and popular works were written in this language. It may be here added that although the Nairs of a province formerly known as Nāyara in Conjeevaram in the Madras Presidency, led by Rājā Nānyadeva of the Karṇāṭakī dynasty came and settled in Nepal about 889 A.D., this language did not change. It has been also found that although the different dynasties like the Gupta, the Āhīr, the Kirati, the Somavamśī, the Sūryya-vamśī, the Lichhavi, the Thākuri and the Mallas and also

the Rānās ruled in Nepal, Nepālī has ceaselessly continued to be the *lingua franca* of the Nepalese community. In a manuscript dated 481 N. E. (1361 A.D.) written in the reign of Rājā Jayarāja Malla, Daivajña, Anantarāma probably a Nair from South India, used this language, in spite of the fact that many manuscripts, written in different characters of India, have been found dating back to nearly a thousand years.

DIFFERENT CHARACTERS USED IN NEPAL.

It may be rightly said that Nepal represents mediæval India, nay Greater India, as regards the different Indian and Northern characters introduced by the different classes of people that immigrated into Nepal. It might also be said that when India underwent economic chaos and political vicissitudes, during the mediæval ages, more prominently with the advent of the invading hordes from the North-Western Provinces of India the various literary works written on palm-leaves, birch-barks, etc., might have been brought when they sought refuge in the valley of Nepal. Surrounded on all sides by the Himalaya ranges and inhabited by a war-like and cultural Nepali race, Nepal is historic to-day not only as the refuge of the chaos-driven and orthodox Indians of the four castes but also as a literary *bank* where they could deposit all their productions of ancient literary culture from oblivion and desecration by the aggressive hordes. To the present day over fifteen kinds of Indian characters are known to the Nepalese, a short description of which is attempted below :—

1. *Raṅjā*.—This is the earliest character in which the Sanskrit Buddhist texts dating back to the second century A.C. are said to have existed. Most of the ancient Buddhist texts including the Buddhist Sanskrit works are said to have been written in this character, as is also evidenced by the use of, and high regard for, this character in Tibet and the

Far East. Even now this character is much used in writing the sacred Buddhist formulas on flags, walls, gates, artistic religious utensils, etc. Every year in the month of Śrāvaṇa the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, the most important philosophical work of Mahāyāna Buddhism written in this character is exhibited in the Vikrama Śīla Vihāra or Thambahil at Katmandu. Another MS. of the same title said to be over 800 years old is enshrined in the Kwalakhu Vihāra at (Aśoka) Pattana.

Raṅjā is also said to be the oldest Nepali character, as not only Sanskrit works but also Nepalese works have been found written in this character. Hodgson is also of the same opinion, as he writes :—‘The three Newari alphabets are denominated Bhunji Mola, Ranja and Newari...but old Bauddha works exhibit them all, especially the two former.’

2. *Bhujimo or Bhujimōla*.—This is said to be the second character used in ancient Nepal. The word itself means ‘the head of a fly’ and does not seem to denote a particular type of India but it signified that this character was written in such an ornamental design that the upper portion of the letter when written bore an appearance of the head of a fly. One MS. namely, the Ratna Sañchaya Gāthā of *Prajñāpāramitā* with the date of 295 N. E. (1175 A.C.) was found written in this character. This work was translated into Chinese between 980 and 1000 A.D. It possesses a very ornate appearance and stripped of its ornamental features, it bore an appearance of the Sanskrit character. MSS. are still available in this character; but it is little in use at present. MSS. like the *Samvarodaya Tantra* and the *Kriyā Saṃgraha* are existent.

3. *Pachumola*.—This is another ancient type. The word stands for ‘a head that is even,’ that is, not with pointed parts as in Newari. All the signs of the letters were written on the same line and not pointed upwards. MSS. like the *Kālachakra Tantra* were found in this character, thus showing that its use was not earlier than the sixth or seventh century A.D. MSS. in this character are still found.

4. *Gujimo or Gomo*.—This is the fourth ancient type used in the mediæval period and the word itself meant that the letters were either with ornamental curves (Gujimola) or with round curves (Gomola). MSS. were formerly written also in this character but when it was first used is not known.

5. *Newārī or Nepālī*.—While the above four types are mostly used in the writing of Sanskrit Buddhist MSS. notwithstanding the fact that they are also said to be the ancient characters of the Nepālī language, Newārī is the national character most popularly used by both the aboriginal Newars and the Śivamārgī or Śākta Nairs who came with Rājā Nānya Deva about the ninth century A.D. This is the present recognised character in which the Nepali literature as also the Sanskrit literature practically used in Nepal, of the different sects of Hindus and also the Buddhists has surpassed all other so-called Nepali characters. It is the national type used by the Nepalese citizens in all their religious and worldly transactions. Researches remain to be done to find the earliest use of Nepali character; but the following MSS. give us some idea of the earliest use of the Newari or Nepali letters:—

1. Ushṇīsha Vijaya Dhāraṇī dated 88 N. E. or 968 A.D.,
Shastri's Catalogue 359B.
2. A Tantric work dated 149 N.E. or 1029 A.D. (Idem,
III, 359A).
3. Chatuṣpīṭha Nibandha „ 165 „ „ 1045 „ (Idem,
III, 359C).
4. Another MS. „ 224 „ „ 1124 (As. Soc. Cat. 72).
5. Nārāyaṇa-Paripriechā „ 481 „ „ 1361 „ (Idem).
6. Paṇiyāvadāna „ 429 „ „ 1309 „ (Ditto).
7. Bendall's Catalogue
Collection Add.
1644 „ 325 „ „ 1205
8. Pañcharakṣhā (ditto) „ 509 „ „ 1389

Thus there are many hundreds of MSS. which are written in Nepalese character and most of them have Nepālī

colophons. Further discussion will follow below on the Newari or Nepali character.

6. *Aśokan Character*.—It is now an admitted fact that Aśoka the Buddhist Emperor of India visited, as the chronicle of Nepal records, Nepal with one of his daughters Chārumatī who was married to Prince Devapāla of Devapattana in Nepal. The four Aśoka stūpas or thuras as the local people call it, one Aśoka Vihāra and remnants of Aśoka chaityas at Aśoka Pattana or modern Pattana bears testimony to the Aśokan influence that Nepal had had. It is now a problem for research as to whether Aśoka did not leave any of his historic pillars in Nepal, as he did at Lumbinī on the Nepal border, also whether the Brāhmī character was not used in Nepal. Bendall however refers to the fact that 'the triangular Aśoka character, already lost in Kuṭila character lingered on later in Nepal than elsewhere.' One inscription on stone water fountain recently found in Nepal displayed the Aśokan form of character.

7. *Kuṭila*.—This is one of the early characters from India in which MSS. were found in Nepal. Cecil Bendall refers to the Pañcharakshā Sūtra written in the Kuṭila type of the eleventh century A.D., also the same written in the 14th year of Nayapāla, the King of Bengal (Circa A.D. 1054). Other MSS. are the Ashtasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā written in the fifth year of King Mahipāla of Bengal (Circa 1020 A.D.) and the Maittreya Vyākaraṇa written in the 57th year of Gopāla Deva of the Pāla Dynasty (tenth century Kuṭila). Although stone inscriptions and manuscripts are still found, it is no longer in use.

8. *Gupta*.—General Cunningham fixes the date of the origin of the Gupta Era to 167 A.D.; but the exact use of the Gupta character in Nepal is still indefinite. Except the Kuṭila character, the former is not existent at the present time.

9. *Devanāgarī*.—The use of this character seems to have come much later. A manuscript of the Ashtasāha-

srikā Prajñāpāramitā taken to Cambridge by Cecil Bendall is dated 128 N.E. (1008 A.D.) and another MS. the Mādhyamika Vṛitti by Chandra Kīrti is dated 701 N.E. (1781 A.D.). The use of this character is of much later growth, as during the last thousand years Newari had become the national character of the people. It is now being used in the State affairs; for Parbatīā or Gurkhālī has no character of its own.

10. *Kayethināgarī*.—This is one of the characters mentioned in the huge stone inscription inscribed by the order of King Jaya Pratāpa Malla of Katmandu (then Kāntipura) in 1654 A.D. But for this mention it is hardly known to the people. It might be said that the character may have been introduced during the advent of Raja Harisimha Deva of Ayodhyā in 444 N.E. (1324 A.D.). This is much akin to Nāgarī.

11. *Maithilī*.—MSS. have been found in this character, dated 433 N.E., 390 Lakshamaṇa Era, which was also introduced from the Bihar side by much later immigrants. The Vṛittasāra by Rāmapati dated 1550 Śāka Era (1628 A.D.) was also found, thus evincing the use of it not later than three centuries. This too is obsolete.

12. *Telugu*.—It is known as Tailangi in Nepal and might have been introduced by the Nairs that came at the end of the 10th century A.D. A manuscript in this character was found some years ago. It is known to the Nepalese; but it is not mentioned in the stone inscription of King Jaya Pratāpa Malla.

13. *Bengalī*.—This is not one of the recognised characters of Nepal; but it is mentioned by King Pratāpa as Gauḍīya and manuscripts dated from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century have been recovered. They are:—

- (1) Mahābhārata Prasthānaparva copied by Rāmdās, dated 545 N.E. (1425 A.D.)

- (2) Siddhekavīra Mahāmantrārāja, dated Śaka Era 1189 (1267 A.D.).
- (3) Sikshā Samuchchaya of Jayadeva of the 14th and 15th centuries.
- (4) Bodhicharyāvatāra, dated 1492 Vikrama Era (1436).

Thus the above thirteen characters are the more prominent characters, although Pratāpa mentions fifteen characters. The fifteen types mentioned are :—

1. * Gomola or Gujīmola. 2. Pārsī or Persian. 3. Tirhūtīyā, probably Maithilī. 4. Rañjā. 5. Majhepata. 6. Devanāgarī. 7. Ujembru (Tibetan). 8. Gaudīya or Bengalī. 9. Arābī or Arabic. 10. Kayethināgarī. 11. Kata or Kuṭila. 12. Umeta (Tibetan). 13. Kashmirī. 14. Feringī or English. 15. Newāra.

So if there are fifteen characters only known to Nepal, the other two might be Tibetan, both the capital and small types. The stone inscription which includes the non-Indian or Western characters cannot be representative of the characters that were recognised in Nepal. It has omitted important types introduced by those who actually immigrated into Nepal. It displays the king's zeal for eulogizing his favourite deity and not his serious devotion to the preservation of the Indian characters introduced by the different settlers in Nepal.

NEPĀLĪ CHARACTER.

The above details enable the determination of the fact that in spite of the different characters introduced into Nepal, the position of the Nepālī or colloquially the Newārī character forms the most important. While the Rañjā, Bhujinimola, Pāchumola, Gujīmola types had been frequently used for the Sanskrit Buddhist works, Newārī was definitely recognised as the national character of the Nepali community. This must

have been considered the simplest, the most adaptable by both the aboriginal Nepalese and the later immigrants. It possesses some of the characters common to Devanāgarī, Rañjā, Bengali, etc. Hodgson aptly remarks, 'Newārī alone is now used by both sects of the Newars for profane purposes and for sacred, both even employ the Devanāgarī, oftener the Newārī.' Of course Nepal being vitally concerned with India Proper has adopted the Sanskritic character. Yet the people had their own character—the Nepālī in which almost all the literary works abound. The existence of this type which exhibits a nationalistic handling dating back to about a thousand years has to be taken into consideration. The main thing therefore is that the entire Nepalese community has Newārī or Nepālī for their literature, and is the only character most widely used by the whole Nepali community.

NEPALESE LITERATURE.

Nepalese literature is divided into two important sections, Saivite and Buddhist. While the two main towns of Kāntipura (Katmandu) and Aśoka Pattana (Pattana) abound in Nepālī works on Buddhism, Bhaktapura (Khopadeśa) is the only town where Śaivite MSS. have been recovered in abundance. Most of the MSS. are written on palmyra leaves and on yellow-painted Nepali plant paper. To make them worm-proof, they use orpiment with flour paste which is applied on the paper and dried up and levelled with a heavy weight. It is divided into about a dozen sections such as follows :—

1. *Dharma Sūtras and Purāṇas :*

12 Buddhist works have been translated into Nepālī, of which the most notable are the Vṛihat Swayambhū Purāṇa, the Megha Sūtra, the Bhagavānaya Janma Charitra, the Buddhokta Saṃsārāmaya, already printed in Nepal, are notable. Of the other works which number over ten independent works, the Haramekhalā with the Vivṛiti commentary in Nepāla Bhāṣhā, the Kubjikālaghuṭtippanī dated 505 N. E. (1385 A. D.) and the

Dharma-Lakshmi-Saṃvād, dated 1581 A.D. are worth mention. All the MSS. have not been recovered and are being searched for.

2. *Vyūhas or Buddhist topographical and biographical works :*

The Gaṇḍa Vyūha, the Guṇakāraṇḍa Vyūha, the Kāraṇḍa Vyūha, and the Sukhāvātī Vyūha.

3. *Jātakas or Previous Birth-stories of Buddha :*

34 Birth-stories are the most popular and are translated from the Jātakamāla of Ārya Sūra, the Jātakāvadāna, the Bodhisattwāvadāna Kalpalatā of Kshemendra. Each story is either a separate manuscript scroll or part of a big MS.

4. *Avādanas or Marvellous Stories of Buddha and his disciples :*

These are translations of the Avadāna Śataka, the Avadānamāla, the Divyāvadāna, etc. Although some of the stories are common to the Jātakas and the Avadānas, there are different interpretations.

5. *Kathā and Vākhan or Stories, Local Traditional and Folklore Stories :*

(a) Stories derived from the Dwāviṃśati Avadāna Kathā, the Hitopadeśa, the Pañchatantra, the Swasthāni. The latest discovery is the Dwādaśa Mantribuddhi Kathā from Bhaktapura, consisting of 12 vernacular translations and the texts.

(b) *Local traditional Legends.*—The legends connected with the popular divinities such as Āryāvalokiteśwara, Ānandā-dilokeśwara, Dharmarājalokeśwara, the Lākhe or the Māra stories, Mañjuśrī, Sasamāñju or the Goddess of Learning, and Vikramāditya. There is a huge literature in this section.

(c) *Folklore Stories.*—These also are numerous being derived from the Vetālapañchaviṃśati, an early MS. known being dated 1675 A. D., local events, etc.

6. *Māhātmyas or Descriptive Accounts of Sacred Places :*

These are long and short descriptions. The known works are the Aṣṭamīvrata, Lakshachaitya, the Nepāla, the Śrīṅgabherī the Uposhadhavrata, the Vasundharāvrata, the Uposhadhavratavidhāna. Wright's Collection includes the last dated 928 N. E. (1808).

7. *The Vamśāvalīs or the Chronicles :*

The literacy of the Nepalese is known by the many *vamśāvalīs* they have about the ancient and modern history of Nepal, of the origin of popular customs and rites, temples, vihāras, etc. The Saṃvatsara records the origin of different eras used in Nepal, one of Bendall's collections being dated 1862 A. D.

8. *Tutas or Popular Hymns :*

There is plenty of vernacular hymns mostly on Buddhist personalities, e.g., Hodgson's Collection known as the Gīta Pustaka dated Nepal Era 825 (1705 A. D.). Bendall got Nāma Saṃgītī dated 1859 A.D. Wright's Collection includes the Sragdharā Stotra dated 1784 and 1846 A.D. Besides the vernacular literature which affords much material for hymnological research, Nepal abounds in Sanskrit hymns derived from Sanskrit works as well as these compiled in Nepal. They are helpful for historical and religious research and a compilation called the Bauddha Stotra Samuchchaya is being attempted.

9. *Songs :*

These are numerous and they are all in the name of kings, divinities, seasons, customs and rites, individuals. Wright in his History of Nepal records the Yaśodharā, dated 1487 A.D.

10. *Dramatic Works :*

The largest number of them is based on Buddhist tradition as well as Brahmin. The most notable are the nāṭakas of Buddha's previous birth-stories, the Hariśchandra, the Gopī-Chandra, the Kārtika. A MS. the Nala-Damayantī Nāṭaka, originated by King Jaya Prakāśa Malla of Kāntipura, has been found in which Hindī and Nepālī have been used. The Nepālī version of the Abhinava Rāghavānanda Nāṭaka has not yet been found.

11. *Rites and Rituals :*

These are all based on the sacred texts as also the rites of popular divinities. The Abhishekavidhi, the Durgati Parīśodhana, the Mahāmañjuśrī and Nāga Pūjās, the Pāpaparimochana Nirdeśa, the Vāgīśwara Pūjā are some of the works.

12. *Politics and Morality :*

The Bodhichāṇakyaṇīti, the Pañchatantra, the Hitopadeśa the Dwādaśamantribuddhikathā, and the Chāṇakayasāra Saṃgraha are the only works known. There are the sectarian versions of the Chāṇakyaṇīti.

13. *Rhetoric and Prosody :*

There is not much worth mention in this line as much research remains to be done on this subject. The Chhandomṛita-latā, an original work on prosody by Pandit Amritananda is the only work known and the people must have had translations. Nor is anything known of Nepālī Grammar although Dr. A. Conrady has given short details on Nepālī Grammar in the Zeitschrift der deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, Band XVII, 1893. A Sanskrit-Nepali word-book, a translation of a chapter of the Amarakosha has also been published therein. It is evident that there are Newārī versions of the Sāraswata Vyākaraṇa, the Bālabodha, etc.

14. *Technical and Medical Works :*

Although Nepal is now well-known for its own art and technical skill, enough literature has not yet been recovered. Part translations of the Ratna Parīkshā by Buddha Bhaṭṭāchāryya dated 1262 A.D. and the Svarodayadeśa might have been made by the artisans who are not well versed in Sanskrit. There are native medical works and the Dravyanirṇaya with Nepālī translation dated 658 N.E. is worth mention.

Recent researches show that loads of manuscripts in the vernacular as well as in Sanskrit are still awaiting light. The main cause of want of enough literature seems to be that almost all the religious and other references were directly made

from the Sanskrit originals. With a huge Sanskrit literature to guide them and having regular preachings in the Vihāras and temples directly from Sanskrit with vernacular interpretations, Nepālī literature like the Bengalī or Hindi literature of ancient days has much field for development.

NEPĀLĪ INDISPENSABLE FOR INDIAN RESEARCHES.

Besides, Nepālī is indispensable for researches in Ancient Indian History and Culture ; because most of the Indian and Nepalese MSS. are written in this character. The earlier MSS. require the knowledge and understanding of the more ancient Nepālī types referred to above. Owing to a superficial knowledge of Nepalese characters and language, even scholars like Bendall, Wright, Rajendralala Mitra and Hara Prasad Shastri have misrepresented ancient Buddhist literatures of Nepal in their editions of the bibliographies of Nepalese ancient MSS. The following are some instances :

Cecil Bendall—Śrīmatyotalake for Śrīmatpotalake.

Bhajudhanamchoyaviya for Bhajudhanam, the word choyaviya is not a proper name ; but it is meant only to say that 'it was written by ' Bhajudhan.

H. P. Shastri—Juro for Julo (A.S.B. Col. p. 13).

Chope for Choye (Idem, p. 26), the colophon given in page 63 of the Catalogue is full of mistranscriptions.

D. Wright—Iratayo Tṛipa for Pratāpo Nṛipaḥ, Kashpiri for Kashmiri. Parbatia for Nepali MSS.

In view of the fact that there is abundant Sanskrit and vernacular literature to be recovered, there should be provision for the recognition and understanding of the Nepalese characters and words. The stone and metal inscriptions still unexplored, the colophons of manuscripts, the hymnological and other works reveal an ancient history of Nepal and India.

“ MISREPRESENTATION OF NEPĀLĪ IN INDIA.

Recently misrepresentations made in the Universities of India by some Nepalese ignorant of the History and Literature of Nepal have been found out. While the Nepal Government institution, the Gurkhā Bhāshā Prakāśinī Samiti is publishing all its publications in the Gorkhā Bhāshā or Gorkhālī, the court language of Nepal, and the Patna University has named it Parbatīā, as that is the popular name for same language, the University of Calcutta has given a double name of Parbatīā for the Translation Papers, and for the Composition Paper Nepālī. Again some Parbatīās of Darjeeling have also called it Nepālī. Fortunately after a joint application by the Nepālī students and merchants, it has been properly named Parbatīā ; while the Nepālī has been reserved for the Hindi of Nepal—Nepālabhāshā. In these days of Oriental and scholarly research, any misrepresentation that might have been wilfully or unknowingly made, should be removed. If there has been any such in the University of Allahabad, an historic centre of culture, it is hoped that authorities concerned will properly term Parbatīā or Gurkhālī as it should be and the historic and classical name of Nepālī or Nepālabhāshā should be reserved for Nepālī alone. Of course when both the languages of Nepal are used there, Parbatīā or Gurkhālī as a court language and Nepālī as the *lingua franca* of the Nepali community which, as Hodgson and Amritananda and others have already admitted, forms the majority of the citizens of Nepal, they are both called Nepalese, in a general sense only. Not only this, the earliest works in Parbatīā published at Benares, are known as Gorkhā Bhāshā or Parbatīā. Vijnān Vilās in his Bhāratavarshako Itihās aptly calls it Parbatīā.

It is, therefore, earnestly expected that through the medium of the Oriental Conference held in the centre of Aryan culture, the paper would be able to rectify the misrepresentation that might have been made in any part of India. The earliest, yet the only language of the Nepali community—the language

without a knowledge of which all ancient Indian researches in history, literature, iconography, hymnology, epigraphy especially as regards the mine of manuscripts in Nepal—the research vernacular which bibliographists, epigraphists, iconographers, etc., like Hodgson, Wright, Bendall, Minayeff, Lévi, Takakusu, Kawaguchi, Shastri, Mitra, Coomaraswamy and many others had to know is distinctly separate from Parbatīā or Gurkhālī, the advent of which cannot be traced earlier than 1768 A.D. and the literature of which is of very recent growth. Hodgson aptly remarks, “The Newars alone have a literature, and that wholly exoteric.”